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ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on the two following questions: (1) What is the status and significance of English in a pluralistic and meritocratic society such as Singapore, in which four co-official languages are recognized (Malay, Mandarin, Tamil, and English) but only one opens the gates to career advancement and economic achievement; and (2) What are the problems in considering the question of standard English? It is concluded that although Singapore will not become a monolingual community with everyone speaking English, the special circumstances regarding the relationship of English and its speakers in the island city-state republic will ensure the emergence of "English-knowing bilingualism." The concomitant emergence of several varieities of Singapore English will be a natural development with the educated variety (Standard Singapore English)--being not much different from other identified standards in both spoken and written forms--prevailing as an International Standard English. (JL)

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THE STATUS OF ENGLISH AND THE QUESTION OF 'STANDARD' IN SINGAPORE: A SOCIOLINGUISTIC PERSPECTIVE

Anne Pakir

1. Introduction

One of the most important lessons in my linguistic training was given by a professor of historical-comparative linguistics: even as we dissect language to understand its structure and its nature, we should always remember that it is not the language itself which is under scrutiny but the speakers of that particular language. It is worthwhile remembering this lesson from that historical linguist as we turn from studying exotic, usually declining, languages to a burgeoning world language such as English, which is estimated to have no fewer than 700 million speakers today[1].

This paper has two foci: first, what is the status and significance of English in a pluralistic and meritocratic society such as Singapore, in which four co-official languages are recognized (Malay, Mandarin, Tamil, English) but only one opens the gates to career advancement and economic achievement? What are the problems in considering the question of 'standard of English' within this context?[2]

The examination of status of the language cannot but be linked to the speakers of that language. Furthermore, the problem of 'good-usage' has to be unravelled into a consideration of who determines the setting of standards and who actually sets the standards in this English-knowing bilingual city Singapore. Thus, the discussion of status and standards of English among Singaporeans will be made within a sociolinguistic perspective of who speaks what English to whom, where, when, and why?

The sociolinguist teaching and researching the English language in Singapore is often in a double-bind: she sees the underlying interest in keeping to the standard in written English, which is fairly invariant the world over, but she is also a keen observer of the developing sub-varieties of spoken English in Singapore. Norm-setter, norm-maker and norm- breaker may all be found in one and the same Singaporean who has been schooled in

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English from an early age but who speaks several other languages and interacts with speakers of these other languages, oftentimes in less than 'good English'.

2. The Status of English in Singapore

In a previous paper (Pakir 1989: 5-9) I dealt with the rising status of English in Singapore and the contemplated as well as non-intended consequences of such a development. Status is a relative concept, and can be increased or decreased by degrees. In Singapore, there is the perception that English has steadily risen in status over the past twenty-five years as a result of language policy and management.

The bilingual education policy in Singapore which began in the 1960s, has continued ever since but with modifications in successive stages which have given increasing emphasis to English. Today, English is the language of instruction in all schools (L1), with one of the other official languages (Chinese, Malay, Tamil) as the second school language (L2)[3]. In 1980, only 9 per cent of Chinese pupils in Primary 1 (the first year of primary education) spoke English as a home language; but in 1987, 19 per cent of Chinese pupils in Primary 1 had English as a home language, marking an almost 10 per cent increase in the number of Chinese six-year-olds who used English as a home language[4]. We note this significant increase in young speakers of the language but ask 'What English?'

In a country where 2.6 million inhabitants use about 30 languages, linguistic heterogeneity is inevitable. However, the official push to make the 77% Chinese, 15 % Malay, 6% Indian, and 2% 'Other' people less linguistically heterogeneous seems to be succeeding with the increasing use of English as the preferred language to foster social cohesion, as well as to ensure that Singapore keeps its leading edge in trade, tourism and industry[5].

Language policy, language use and language attitudes in this city-state have undoubtedly given rising status to English. It is a powerful and prestigious language in terms of educational and career opportunities; it plays an important role in banking and finance, law and administration, in the media, and in international communication. As tangible benefits accrue from using it as a working language, English has been appropriated by more and more users.

3. The Problem of Standard: A Sociolinguistic Perspective

The sociolinguistic reality vis-a-vis English is that in Singapore, there are increasing numbers of speakers for whom English is something between a 'first' and 'second' language because it functions in natural and spontaneous communication. Expressed in another way, it means that Singapore English has gained more and more users and it has gained more and more uses (Tay, 1982:51-60).

This section will present evidence of the functioning of English-knowing bilingualism in Singapore and dwell upon the development of English in Singapore at two distinct levels: International Standard[6] (internationally functional) and Singapore Variety (indigenously functional). It takes into account a model of the Singapore English speech continuum based on formality and proficiency clines. The model of expanding triangles of English use by Singaporeans is introduced to explain the behavior of users of English, especially in rapport and solidarity situations. The question of standard English is examined in terms of its uses and users along the clines of formality and proficiency.

3.1 English-knowing Bilingualism

'English-knowing bilingualism' a term first used by Kachru (1983:40-42), is particularly relevant to Singapore. 'Bilingualism' in Singapore has come to be uniquely defined as 'proficiency in English and one other official language'[7], and is invariably linked to educational policy in the country. In time to come, most bilinguals, if not all, in Singapore will be English-knowing bilinguals.

In fact, it has been claimed that while there are other countries which teach their children in more than one language, there is no other country that 'tries to educate an entire population so that everyone is literate in English, and at the same time, has a reasonable knowledge of his mother tongue'[8].

Owing to its dominance, English has extended into various social, cultural, educational and commercial contexts. English has also penetrated into other societal levels in Singapore, besides the upper and upper middle classes.

At the most general societal level, the functions served by English in these new developing contexts include the instrumental (medium of learning in

the education system), the regulative (regulation of conduct through the legal and administrative structure), the interpersonal (link language for international communication), and the imaginative or innovative (Kachru 1983:42).

The first three functions at societal level are being served by the sub-variety of English found at the higher end of the Singapore English speech clines. At the level of the individual these same functions call for the sub-variety of English found at the lower end of the English speech clines. The last function has been traditionally served by a high variety of English but because of the nature of bilingualism here (English-knowing), the imaginative or innovative function is also increasingly being served by a sub-variety of English not usually found in codified texts such as poems, short stories and plays by Singaporean writers.

3.2. The Singapore English Speech Continuum

Platt and Weber's 1980 descriptive attempt to categorize the kinds of English spoken here was based on the socio-economic status and educational background of the speakers[9]. In their top-down approach, they speak of a speech continuum which has at its highest end the acrolectal kind of speech and at its lowest end the basilectal -- with the upper and lower mesolectal levels in the middle. The claim is that the highest variety - the acrolect - is spoken by persons of the highest status, and that the 'lowest' variety, the basilect is spoken by members of the lowest status group. They believe, and they are not entirely wrong in their belief, that an individual's educational achievements are closely linked with his or her socio-economic success.

However, educational background cannot be seen in a one-to-one relationship with the position of a speaker on the socio-lectal scale. Two Singaporeans may have had the same number of years of secondary education in English and both have obtained their 'O' levels. Speaker A may be from a low status home background where only a Chinese dialect or a basilectal type of English is spoken and may be employed in a lower status service job, where only a lower lect English or a Chinese dialect is spoken to the clients or among the employees. On the other hand, speaker B may be from a higher status background and hold a position as a clerk in a firm where there is a need to use both written and spoken English frequently. One would expect Speaker B to be able to speak a higher English lect than Speaker A, although both had the same educational qualification, namely 'O' levels.

Although Platt and Weber did valuable work by presenting a theoretical framework for understanding the sub-varieties of Singapore English, the model -- based on socio-economic and educational status -- is problematic[10].

There is also the problem of what exactly is implied by the term 'basilectal': could this term be accurately used to include the English spoken by second language learners of English in Singapore and the pidginized varieties found in limited interactions? English spoken with limited proficiency by those who schooled in non-English medium schools and the pidginized form of English used by speakers of different languages communicating for limited purposes are different in nature from the English used by educated speakers and native English speakers.

A distinction should be made therefore between those who speak both the most formal and the most informal varieties and those who speak English with a limited proficiency in the language[11]. Such a distinction, however, will be difficult to maintain in the real world. It may be possible to collapse the two as being part of the low lectal range of individuals, an indigenized form of English (IFE)[12], usually identified as Singapore Colloquial English.

One can circumvent the problem of the acrolectal-basilectal distinction with another model -- that of the Singapore English speech continuum[13] and the hypothesis of expanding triangles of use (Pakir, 1990).

We begin with the assumption that 'Singapore English' is the kind of English developed by and belonging to Singaporeans[14].

As stated elsewhere (Pakir 1988:9), the Singapore English speech continuum is formed minimally along two dimensions. The first dimension along the cline of formality from Singapore Standard English (SSE) on the upper end to Singapore Colloquial English (SCE) on the lower end, represents what Gupta has described as a diglossic situation, following Ferguson's (1959) description of classic diglossia. Here, H is used for formal contexts -- in Parliament, in the courts, in administration and high finance, in public speeches, high powered meetings, and in classrooms. The L variety is reserved for informal situations - among friends, to semi-strangers, in service encounters, at work-places, at play. SSE here is an International Standard English (ISE) while SCE represents an Indigenised Form of English in Singapore (IFE).

The second dimension is along the cline of proficiency in English[15], a range which I have artificially broken up into five graded series: the highest being 'advanced' (inter alia, educated or standard variety), followed by 'adept', 'intermediate', 'basic' and 'rudimentary' or pidgin-like at the lowest level. These levels correlate with number of years of contact with English usually in an institutional setting, like the school.

The formality cline is also arbitrarily graded into five series (drawing from Joos' Five Clocks and Labov's stylistic variation in interviews): at the highest end, 'formal', followed by 'careful', 'consultative', 'casual' and 'intimate', at the lowest end.

The near-universal use of English in Singapore today, in addition to the other languages, has produced a population that knows English but with varying proficiency levels.

Proficiency, in turn, determines the largest movement in terms of expanding triangles[16] of English expression by English-knowing bilinguals in Singapore. Speakers of English low on the cline of proficiency remain pretty much at the lower end, and cannot range in their formality dimension. In other words, they form small triangulations, starting from the rudimentary end; whether the occasion is most formal or most intimate, the kind of English sub-variety remains essentially sub-standard. As proficiency increases, slightly bigger triangles are possible, with shifts made for corresponding formality levels, and including more varietal range (see diagram below).

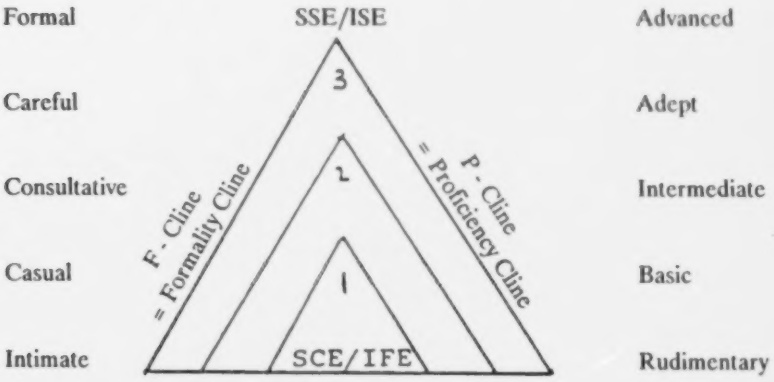

Diagram: Expanding Triangles of English Expression by English-Knowing bilinguals in Singapore

Highly educated users of English are found at the top ends of both speech clines. However, their movement along the clines is fluid and far-ranging as compared to others less proficient. They are capable of moving along the whole formality cline from top to bottom, and yet cross over to the proficiency cline, often remaining at the top end and occasionally stretching down to the intermediate level or even lower.

In the most intimate situations, they are capable of producing very 'basic' or 'rudimentary' expressions and may prefer to do so, for striking rapport and maintaining solidarity. In casual encounters, even with semi-strangers, they understand and use what can be termed a low lect (Platt and Weber's 'basilect'?) called Singapore Colloquial English (SCE), and known by the popular name, Singlish[17]. This low lect is that sub-variety which is indigenously functional (indigenous variety) and gives a sense of identity to the users as belonging to the Singapore speech community. It is commonly found in informal domains.

However, in formal settings, the English that is used is identifiably Standard English, almost no different from the variety used by educated speakers of English elsewhere. This high lect (Platt and Weber's 'acrolect'?) or Standard Singapore English (SSE) is also usually reserved for international communication and intelligibility, being an ISE.

3.3 Functions served by the Indigenous Variety

The sets of data presented here were obtained from English-speaking bilinguals. The data sets show that two distinct varieties - internationally functional and indigenously functional - are very much in evidence here.

Lect switching is common in the speech of highly educated users of English[18]. The data below[19], representative of the speech of National University of Singapore students, indicates obvious lectal variation:

[From a phonetics tutorial, while S is talking to her tutor]

S: Sir, what is the difference between Cardinal Vowel Three and Cardinal Vowel Four? I can't hear the difference.

(After the tutorial is over, S asks her friend)

S: * **Eh**! What did he say **ah**? Did you get the difference between CV Three and Four?

(Her friend nods)

S: * You understand **ah**? **Eh good**! Tell me **lah**[20]!

The functions served by Singapore IFE, marked by asterisks in the data, are both unifying as well as separatist. Its use unifies Singaporeans speaking informally, and separates them from non-Singaporeans or other Singaporeans for whom formal speech is required (less intimate, more distant, or in formal settings).

The separatist function can be seen in lect-switching. Such switching between the different lects is an important indicator of class membershipping: if I refuse, as an educated English speaker, to lect-switch to a lower variety, the colloquial variety of English, i.e. switch from a formal, educated variety to an informal low variety, when speaking in informal situations to participants (who may or may not belong to the same socio-economic background as I do), there is an indication of separateness that I seem to want to maintain.

There is also the issue of what happens to those who only have small triangles of English expression, those who have only low fluidity along the continuum. They may not necessarily come from a low socio-economic background. Cut off from schooling opportunities at a young age, these speakers have continued using the IFE/SCE with interference from the surrounding languages that they know and the different models of English available.

Their use of English would signal a separating function: them-Singaporeans vs us-Singaporeans in terms of the ability to move easily and widely along the continuum. Most will not be able to move from the informal, colloquial variety that they use all the time to that educated, formal variety that is used by the highly educated.

Again, there is the intelligibility question[21] which adds to the unifying/separatist consideration of Singapore English in terms of International Standard and the indigenously functional.

The assumption that speakers want to be intelligible all the time is not always correct. Sometimes there is the desire to be unintelligible to an outsider, e.g. in a multilingual environment bilinguals sometimes code-switch to a completely different language to keep a third party out of a piece of conversation. Singaporeans sometimes lect-switch to the lowest variety of English found here, in order to remain incomprehensible to an outsider.

Moreover, the 'rapport and solidarity' factor adds to the unifying function of IFE/SCE.

By the 'rapport' factor, I imply that there exists among English-educated Singaporeans a tendency to strike a rapport among themselves in their use of Singapore English, especially the colloquial variety. This rapport is not readily seen in their contact with native speakers of English from outside of Singapore. Again, we see how the use of English in Singapore serves a separatist function, the 'us' and 'them' phenomenon. The rapport/familiarity factor accounts for the use of the indigenized form of English, whether among highly educated or less educated individuals.

To obtain speaker notions of the forms of English they used, I carried out a simple exercise among three English-knowing bilingual students (in fact, three Punjabis who speak English at home, and learn/t English (EL1) and Mandarin (CL2) at school). W is a twenty year old national serviceman, B is an eighteen year old junior college student, and K is a fifteen year old high school student (reading for his Cambridge 'O' levels).

They were asked to read a number of utterances in SCE, the indigenized form of English in Singapore, and asked to translate into what they would consider an appropriate form for somebody who is new to the country and a native speaker of English. The numbered sentences and the elicited forms from each are presented below. Only a selection is given below, owing to space limitation.

*(1) Aiya! Early early don'[22] say - now so late already. Where got[23] shop open now?

W: Oh no, why didn't you say so earlier. Now the shop is closed.

B: Why didn't you tell me earlier. The shops are all closed now.

K: Why didn't you tell me earlier. The shops are closed now.

*(2) Eh, you know that girl Rosemary or not? She very havoc one you know. Every night come home so late, give her father scold!

W: Do you know the girl Rosemary? She is very havoc. She comes home late every night and gets a scolding from her father.

B: You know that girl Rosemary? She's very havoc. Comes home late every night and gets a scolding from her father.

K: Do you know that girl Rosemary? She's very loose. Every night she comes home so late that her father scolds her.

*(3) I tell you, you help me I help you OK? You don say me I don say you lah.

W: You scratch my back, I'll scratch your back. You don't backstab me and I won't backstab you.

B: I'll scratch your back and you scratch mine.

K: If I help you I hope you'll return the favour. You scratch my back, and I'll scratch yours.

*(4) You try to teach my son la, I tell you, you can cough blood[24] you know.

W: You try teaching my son and you will vomit blood.

B: My son is unteachable.

K: I don't think you'll have enough patience to teach my son.

*(5) You believe her ah, not real one lah, she play play only.

W: Don't believe her; she's just pulling a fast one on you.

B: It's not real; she's putting up an act.

K: Don't be taken in; she's not serious (about you).

*(6) You din do homework ah! Die for you! After give teacher scold; eh, she very fierce one you know.

W: You didn't do your homework? You're going to get a scolding from the fierce teacher you have.

B: That fierce teacher is going to scold you for not doing your work.

K: You're in deep trouble; your teacher's going to scold you for not doing your homework.

Comparing the responses obtained from native speakers of English (one British lecturer who had been teaching in Singapore for 12 years, another who had been teaching for 6 years and an Australian who had been teaching for 5 years), it is clear that these Singaporeans are quite close to International Standards as represented in the responses given by these native speakers.

Immediately after the responses were obtained, quick individual interviews with the three (W, B, and K) were conducted, as to which variety (the first or the second) they preferred for themselves. Their answers are given below:

W: I would speak to my close friends either way. But to fellow-soldiers and reservists, the asterisked forms are preferred. The reason is that I don't want to appear snobbish.

B: If I speak to friends my age, and informally, I'll speak that (asterisked) way. It's easier to communicate and sometimes if you speak proper English they will feel that you are trying to put on an act and appear high-class. What's worse, some can't understand if you speak in proper English and it's so embarrassing for me to have college mates among them. I will definitely not use the 'local' form with principal and teachers.
Perhaps to teachers I'm close to, I'll speak Proper English with a **la** at the end. With **la** especially when used overseas, people will recognize that you're from Singapore.

K: I prefer to speak the second way, especially to my good friend, Donny. It sounds better, more presentable. I used to speak the first way up to Secondary 3. Now I am in Secondary 4, I've decided to change because it will be of use in the future. I want proper English to come out naturally. Sometimes, I suffer lapses into the first because old habits are hard to

break. If dealing with certain people, such as a person who has not had much education, I would speak in the first way, to make him comfortable, and not make him feel I'm snobbish. If you talk in the second way, then people will think you are trying to lose your Singapore identity and trying to speak like a foreigner. They think that Singlish is unique so if you talk properly, they will think that you are trying to be high-class and you probably won't have a big circle of friends. It depends on who is being spoken to.

The possibility of lect-switching, for reasons of rapport and solidarity, exists for these English-knowing bilinguals. English-knowing bilinguals range along the speech continuum from high level formality/proficiency (as shown in the use of Standard Singapore English) to low level formality/proficiency, displaying 'good-usage' in one or rudimentary or even pidgin-like proficiency in the other. Their receptivity to this fluidity of movement along the range of the speech continuum enables them to have larger triangulations. The fluidity among English-knowing bilinguals, changing from one variety of English to the other and back again, is a process that is often missed, and gives the impression that a kind of semi-formal English is all that can be achieved by English users here.

Most of the relatively young speakers in this sample will take up positions where their linguistic behavior will serve as a model to other speakers.

They are the English-knowing bilinguals, a breed that Singapore would have produced by the turn of the twenty-first century, confident in the knowledge that they can hold their own in standard English and yet, use Singapore Colloquial English which is non-standard, rather than sub-standard, for their own purposes and communication and in acts of identity.

4. Conclusion

The status of English and the issue of standard English in Singapore have to be examined from a sociolinguistic perspective. The very wide range, from a formal 'international' English to highly distinctive types spoken by those comfortable with the indigenously functional, indigenized form of English whether from lower educational and socio-economic status or not, have resulted from use and user considerations, especially speaker attitude and use. Sociolinguists recognise that there is no single, homogeneous, monolithic variety called Singapore English but instead there exists a whole range of sub-varieties.

The above discussion of English-knowing bilinguals in Singapore suggests the necessity of a model of expanding triangles to understand how a range of varieties of English can be expected and for what reasons.

Whether or not this model of expanding triangles of English expression is psychologically real[25], we can use it to understand the range and diversity of the sub-varieties of English spoken by English-knowing bilinguals in Singapore, the kinds used by individuals highly proficient in the language.

English-knowing bilinguals, as examined in this study, range in their bi-dimensionality in terms of formality and proficiency. Gaining proficiency is a process requiring instruction at the most formal level. However, having gained proficiency in the language, the individuals are free to range from the highest levels of formality to the lowest, which includes forms used representative of basilectal-like speech (IFE).

Thus, a picture of English use in Singapore emerges: increasingly we see the phenomenon of lectal switches from formal/standard English to informal/non-standard English.

The standard is close to that of English spoken in the Inner Circle[26] and can be considered International Standard. The non-standard is peculiar to the Singapore setting and is favoured where rapport and intimacy are assumed among advanced English-knowing bilinguals or where limited proficiency allows the individual only a narrow range up the cline of formality and the cline of proficiency. The indigenous variety, indigenously functional, and labelled an IFE or SCE in this paper, is rapidly being taken upon by speakers (and increasingly writers) in Singapore to represent a Singaporean identity.

The observation of the authors of THE STORY OF ENGLISH (McCrum, Cran and MacNeil 1987:336) bears repetition:

> The English favoured by the government is, of course, the Standard English of international finance, trade and technology. But the English emerging in the multi-racial, multicultural society of Singapore is rather different.

How different that English is, is not a matter of a finished product as much as an on-going process leading to several products. The use of English in a rapidly growing English-knowing bilingual community, gives rise to distinctive sub-varieties of Singapore English.

Although Singapore will not become a monolingual community with everybody speaking English, the special circumstances regarding the relationship of English and its speakers in the island city-state republic will ensure the emergence of English-knowing bilingualism here. The concomitant emergence of several varieties of Singapore English will be a natural development with the educated variety (SSE) --being not much different from other identified standards in both spoken and written forms -- prevailing as an ISE.

With our focus on speakers of the language, we do well to remember an observation by Fishman, Ferguson and Das Gupta (1968:1):

> Languages do not really exist except as part of a matrix of language varieties, language behaviors, and behaviors towards language.

So also 'standard languages'. This is especially true in the case of a global language such as English with its myriad indigenized forms and its vested international standard forms.

NOTES

[1]Alan Davies cites Crystal's (1988) estimate that there are over 700 million English users, of whom more than 300 million are native speakers. 'Others have put the total over 1 billion' (Davies, 1989: 455).

[2]See Tay and Gupta (1983) and Gupta (1986) for a discussion on a standard for written Singapore English.

[3]English has been the first school language (EL1) for the majority of school children since the 1980s. Today, about ten per cent of the total school population who are academically able and who wish to study Chinese at first language level (CL1) along with EL1 can do so at 10 primary schools, 9 secondary schools, and two junior colleges. Malay and Indian children are also allowed the opportunity to have Malay as the first school language (TL1) along with EL1. To date, the demand has not been made.

[4]The Straits Times, 9 October 1987.

[5]On 12 July 1986, S Rajaratnam, Senior Minister in the Prime Minister's Office was reported thus in the Straits Times press: 'I think Singapore is the only country in the world to use a foreign language as its working language'.

[6]Quirk and Stein in their discussion of 'What is Standard English?' argue that 'Standard English has regional branches, especially the English branch and the American....(1990: 120). They foresee that as 'further national branches develop (Australian English is an obvious candidate), the breadth and complexity of Standard English vocabulary must inevitably increase.' (1990: 121).

[7]Tay, Mary W.J (1983: 176): 'the official definition of bilingualism in Singapore is proficiency in English and one other official language. Thus, from the age of six, every child has to learn English and one of the other official languages'.

[8]A quotation from the Minister of Education, Tony Tan, as reported in the Straints Times press, 17 march 1990. The term 'mother tongue' as officially used in fact refers to 'ethnic mother tongue', i.e. Mandarin for the Chinese, Malay for the Malays, Tamil for the Indians.

[9]See Bloom (1986: 416-417) where difficulties of the model are pointed out succinctly.

[10]Tay (1986: 103-104) discusses the advantages of the Platt and Weber (1980) model while dealing with its serious inadequacies.

[11]Bloom (1986: 423) reports Tongue's (1974) and Crewe's (1977) early recognition of 'two varieties of English spoken in Singapore, one formal and one informal; that the formal one is something like a standard, but not everybody can speak it proficiently; and that the informal variety, which practically eveyone does know, is definitely not standard.'

[12]See Strevens 1983: 23-30

[13]The idea of a different Singapore English speech continuum was first presented in a conference paper (Pakir, 1988).

[14]Bloom has delimited 4 major varieties of English in Singapore (1986: 439): (1) the formal, inter alia, standard variety; (2) the informal, inter alia, nonstandard; (3) the English of the Chinese-educated (playfully labelled helicopter English); and (4) the standard language of Southeast England, whose status in Singapore is ambivalent.

[15]See Kachru (1983: 41ff) on the use of the term 'clines' to describe proficiency in English and its functional uses in non-native varieties of English.

[16]I am grateful to N.S. Prabhu whose discussion with me on my 1988 paper led to this idea of expanding triangles of English expression among English-knowing bilinguals in Singapore.

[17]In popular usage, the term SINGLISH is often used to refer to the 'substandard' variety. It is usually a colloquial variety, now increasingly seen in print (in the Straits Times, most recently) or works by Singapore writers. Examples that come to mind are humor books by Toh Paik-Choo (Eh Goondu!, 1983, and Lagi Goondu!, 1987), and plays by Michael Chiang (Army Daze, the Assorted Misadventures of a National Serviceman, 1985) and Stella Kon (Emily of Emerald Hill, 1989). This colloquial variety called Singlish is used by choice by people who have a full mastery of the standard variety or by people who have little or no mastery of English. There has been a recent show of pride in this indigenized form of English:

> 'Singlish is the spontaneous and delightful way that Singaporeans express themselves in English. In short, street talk. It is a language that is exclusively ours, lah. Singlish is the common dialect of the people of Singapore.'
>
> -- A quotation from The New Paper, 15 August 1988.

[18]See Tay, 1986: 93: 'The word lect suggests language variation. Thus, there is dialect (variation according to geographical region), sociolect (variation according to socioeconomic class), and idiolect (variation according to individual, possibly idiosyncratic usage). When the word lect is used with reference to Singaporean Malaysian English, it suggests that Singaporean-Malaysian English is not a homogeneous variety but a variety with various sub-varieties, where variation depends not only on user factors such as level of education, social class, but also on use factors such as the degree of formality.'

[19]The data is from TYC, a student in the EL302 (Language in Society) course that I teach.

[20]Discourse or communicative particles serve to mark emotive or attitudinal speech involving dimension of informality, familiarity, solidarity and rapport between participants. See Richards and Tay 1977, Kwan-Terry

1978, Bel and Ser 1983, Loke and Low 1988. In particle analysis two major problems are raised by Platt 1987: (i) To what extent do these particles function as speech community indicators and/or stylistic markers? (ii) Are they uni or multifunctional? Platt's discussion on the communicative or discourse functions of particles in informal Singapore English covers a, la, ho, lo, le, me, what, ma, man, and de which all appear in 'Basilectal Singapore English' but Platt emphasizes the fact that only a, and what appear consistently higher up on the sociolectal scale (Platt 1987: 395, Platt and Ho, 1989: 220).

[21]On the intelligibility question, Tay 1986 (cf. Smith, 1981) has turned our attention to these questions: who is intelligible, about what, to whom, where, when and why.

[22]An orthographic representation of a reduced final consonant cluster.

[23]Platt and Weber (1980: 61) describe Singapore English GET (with meanings 'to obtain' or 'to become') which in the past tense form GOT, as well as the verb form GOT, has either possessive denotations or existential-locative denotations:

(1) I got two brother, one sister
'I have two brothers and a sister.'
(2) Here got many nice houses
'There are many nice houses here'.

[24]Lexical equivalents from the other languages for 'cough blood' are 'chikek dara' (Malay) and 'tor hueh' (Hokkien). One has to be severely ill to disgorge blood. The expression is meant to describe extreme exasperation at someone.

[25]Compare, for example, the problem of variable rules advocated by variationists: are variable rules psychologically real? Cf. Downes 1984: 101.

[26]See Kachru 1987: 223, footnote 6, for a quick summary of his terms 'Inner Circle', 'Outer Circle', and 'Expanding Circle'. In Outer Circle settings, non-native 'institutionalized' varieties have developed. In the Expanding Circle 'performance' non-native varieties are said to be developing.

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F - Cline = Formality Cline

P - Cline = Proficiency Cline

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